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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: December 10, 1958

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SUBJECT: Berlin

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HR-m/59, MARA, D-10 4/16/91

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Paul Koht, Ambassador of Norway  
Mr. Odd G. Jakobsen, Second Secretary, Embassy of Norway  
Mr. Foy D. Kohler, EUR  
Mr. James H. McFarland, GER

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Ambassador Koht asked for Mr. Kohler's views on Berlin. Was it now official that the four Foreign Ministers would meet on Sunday the 14th of December in Paris? Mr. Kohler replied that the Secretary was much better and expected to go to Paris. The Ambassador remarked that it was very important that the Secretary be there. He then asked what our position would be at Paris. Mr. Kohler stated that we hoped to have our position shaped up for the NATO Council. The communique of the 27th was still our general line. Some changes had become necessary since we got the Soviet note. The agency concept could not be maintained when the Soviets and the GDR denied the relationship. The Ambassador said the newspapers had the idea all doors had been left open. Mr. Kohler said this was an incorrect assumption. We will have nothing to do with the GDR nor will we accept the Soviet thesis that they can transfer their responsibilities to the GDR. Allied agreements and the conquest of Nazi Germany formed the basis for our access rights and not permission of the Soviets or GDR.

Ambassador Koht asked if we did not have to take over the Soviet Zone under this theory. Mr. Kohler agreed that this was true under established concepts of international law. We were ready to use force if necessary to maintain access and would not recognize any "rights" of the GDR. This might well mean a test of force. It was his personal as well as official view that we must face

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this issue. If we temporize we will lose. Moscow is directly challenging a position on which we have said an attack will be regarded as an attack on us. The fact that there is no armed attack does not change the matter. This is different from the Taiwan Straits problem. If we yield on this we will not be able to hold anything. This does not mean that we will not do what we can to reach a peaceful solution. Ambassador Koht asked what would happen if the Communists announced the access roads had to be closed for repair. Mr. Kohler replied that under the vacuum theory we should then take over repair of the roads, move in engineer troops and road building equipment. The Ambassador asked at what point this action would be undertaken. Mr. Kohler stated that as long as they let our vehicles and convoys pass unmolested this would not be necessary. The Russians must be made to see clearly the danger of the situation. We do not think they want a third world war at this time. But they have gone a long way and have not left themselves much room to back out.

The Ambassador asked if we would try to help them. Mr. Kohler said it would certainly be in our interest to help the Russians back down if NATO is behind us. If the Ambassador or his Government had any ideas on how to handle the problem they would certainly be welcome. The Ambassador said he thought the Russians wanted to negotiate for all of Germany. Mr. Kohler noted that an offer to do so is lying on the table in Moscow today. We do not have much evidence of Soviet willingness on this, only an unfavorable Izvestia article. There had been no official communication, however, except the Soviet note which was an ultimatum we could not accept.

Ambassador Koht asked what the attitude of the British, French and Germans was. There had been no debate in the NATO Council but the Germans had handed in a memorandum. He supposed that something more could be expected next week. Mr. Kohler agreed and stated this would probably be the No. 1 item on the NATO agenda.

The Ambassador said that the Norwegian Foreign Minister was in India and he would be flying to Paris on Sunday. Anything he could send him in advance would be helpful. He asked if it was true that the U.S. had no particular inhibitions against going forward with negotiations, even on the Foreign Minister level. Mr. Kohler acknowledged that we had no inhibitions but that we had not quite decided on a formula. We had indicated in our note of September 30 our willingness to take the German question out of the larger package. We would probably even accept a conference with Germans as technical advisers without accepting Eastern or Western delegations as such. Ambassador Koht thanked Mr. Kohler and said the talk had been very useful. Mr. Kohler said he hoped it would be possible to communicate the U.S. line to his Foreign Minister. We hoped for a strong, ringing NATO statement on Berlin.

Ambassador Koht said that he was at a loss as to what was going on at the Geneva meetings. Mr. Kohler stated that the surprise attack conference

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is definitely facing postponement. The other one is going on after weeks of sparring. The principle of control at last had been accepted and that was very encouraging. The Soviets might still seek a veto, however. The Ambassador noted that there had been no more nuclear explosions detected and he had seen no more statements about the Soviets claiming they have to catch up.

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